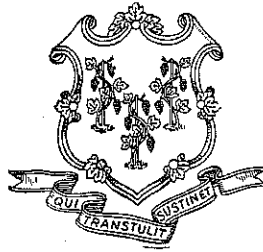


SENATOR CATHY OSTEN

Nineteenth District

Legislative Office Building
Room 3800
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Tel. 860-240-0579
Toll-free 1-800-842-1420
Fax 860-240-5306

www.SenatorOsten.cga.ct.gov



State of Connecticut
SENATE

Chair

Labor & Public Employees Committee

Vice Chair

Planning & Development Committee

Member

Public Safety & Security Committee
Veterans' Affairs

Good Day Respected Chairs and Ranking Members and the Children's Committee.

My name is Cathy Osten and I'm here to speak on the need and my support for SB #158 which will create a task force to develop curriculum designed to provide knowledge to children in an age appropriate fashion about sexual abuse prevention.

With all that we are required to teach children, why this? I say why not?

Well I could tell you about the young women I met while working for the Department of Correction. As an aside 67% of all female inmates are sexually abused preadolescences. One young woman would relive her 10th birthday gift by jumping off stairs/fire escapes. Her gift was rape (by a family member). She escaped back then by jumping out of a 2nd story window, breaking both legs with a compound fractures. She still bears the scars.

I could tell you about my own family member (the reason I worked on Megan's Law) who was abused and took a year to disclose this fact.

I could tell you about the fact that our children have more to fear from inside the home than a stranger as 90% of child sexual assaults happen by family, friends or neighbors.

I met Erin Merryn at the Glamour Magazine Awards and heard of her campaign to bring awareness and sexual abuse prevention to all 50 states I doubt she will stop there. I asked her for more information and once receiving it was pleased and honored to introduce this legislation here in CT. As Erin states in her testimony, 5 states have passed this, 10 more have legislation pending.

So back to the reason 'why here, why now'? Because simply it is right and, if not now, then when?

The socio-economic implications are simply too great to bear inaction leaves us with damaged adults that cost us more each year.

I want to leave you with the story of Charmaine, a young 20 yr. old who I met again while working for the Department of Correction. I was conducting a program which brought

young offenders together with teens hoping to change a few lives by showing them the consequences their actions could have. It was similar to the concept of 'scared straight' but without the yelling. We were at a high school talking about choices and one of the inmates was telling the students why she had ended up in jail. She talked about her life and choices she had made and described her sexual abuse by her family members. She told the teens that problems such as hers could be dealt with differently. That disclosure was better than blaming herself and being angry and acting out.

But back to Charmaine, later in that week she came to me and said that the program called Project Rap had made a great difference to her. She told me she had made a phone call home after our last outing. The call was to her family to keep her daughter away from her cousin. And matter of factly she told me that until getting involved in this program she had not known that sexual abuse was not acceptable or appropriate. That she did not have to put up with it. She knew if she did not act her young daughter would be facing the same painful, humiliating abuse she had faced. She knew she had to and was going to protect her daughter from her family.

I ask you today to pass this bill, start up this task force... and let's get around to protecting children.